114 It can be said that from the time of the Conquest such information as we have about the Indians in their ramifications and languages we owe to the Missionary Fathers. Any attempt to write about these Indians whom the Spaniards found on our continent really has to take very specially into account the writings of these meritorious soldiers of Christ.

"The Matacos are also known by the names Mataguayos, 101 131 Notenes, Vejoses, Ocoles, Malbalas, Chunupis (1) and others, according to location. All of them with only slight differences speak the same language and their customs are practically identical. They occupy the western part of central and southern Chaco, principally both banks of the Bermejo River and the right bank of the Pilcomayo." [599]

1. Not to be confused with the Chunupi-Vilelas.

[161] "The number of these Indians is probably about 20,000. Some 184 of them already have dealings with the frontier Christians, among 648 whom they spend some time each year, working on their ranches; while others live in complete isolation from the whites, whom they regard as their enemies, and not without reason, especially the Argentines who for some years now have been systematically ousting them from their lands, persecuting and exterminating them. It is probable then that within a few years the Matacos will have undergone great changes in their manner of living and will have diminished in number. Be that as it may the present day Matacos are still constituents of quite a large tribe which is different in some respects from the others.

[142] The Mataco is of middling stature, somewhat slim and of a 181 dark coppery color; apathetic in nature, reserved and wary, his glance reflects suspicion and treachery. His manners are boorish and his person and physiognomy vile and repulsive. He is a thief by instinct and he also steals because he considers it his duty. He is long-suffering and warlike, lazy and dirty in habit and innately cowardly and vengeful. The individual members of the neighboring tribes are characterized by a mental alertness which, though untutored is there for all to see. Not so the Matacos, who are mentally sluggish and to whom one cannot even attribute astuteness, in spite of their being sneak thieves. They are admired by all for the apparent lack of feeling with which they endure insults and also for the cold-bloodedness with which they will stab an enemy or allow themselves to be stabbed."